

raised. Their own requests for putting those in action—they are now saying no. Why do you think? Why do you think?

Now the Republican leader has repeatedly stated that the Democrats must raise the debt ceiling on our own, and he has directly cited precedents of 2003, 2004, and 2006 when the Senate voted to raise the debt ceiling by a majority vote. But what he conveniently and repeatedly ignores—and he knows better—he ignores that in each of those examples, the minority allowed an up-or-down vote without—without—a partisan filibuster. In other words, the other side said: Get us to 50 votes, and we won't make you get to 60.

That is just what we are asking for now. We are proposing the same offer now, which Leader MCCONNELL has cited. Let us vote to raise the debt ceiling without a partisan filibuster. In fact, this was the thrust of my consent request last week, which would have resolved this Republican-driven default crisis with an up-or-down vote. Republicans could have gotten their chance to vote no, and we could all have put an end to this needless impasse. But given the easiest way out of the mess, the Republicans still refuse to take “yes” for an answer. Now our country is on the brink of a crisis whose consequences will reverberate around the world.

The bottom line is, this Chamber must pass legislation to avoid a default. Accordingly, I will soon file cloture on the House-passed proposal that will suspend the debt limit until December of 2022. We aren't asking Republicans to support it when it comes time for a vote; we only ask that they get out of the way as Democrats pass it on our own, just as the majority party did in the early 2000s. It is really that simple. If Republicans want to vote to stop payments from going to Social Security recipients or veterans, then be my guest, but they ought to get out of the way and let the legislation pass the Senate.

The fact is, we don't have the luxury of waiting until October 18 to extend the debt ceiling. Even a near miss can have dramatic consequences. Every single day we delay taking action, we increase the chances of doing irreversible damage to our global financial system, our economic recovery, and trust in our country's ability to pay its debts.

So, again, we will need to get a bill extending the debt ceiling to the President's desk by the end of this week. We aren't asking Republicans to vote yes even though it is debt that they incurred; we are simply asking that they get out of the way.

I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague for his courtesy.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I want to begin today with a quotation:

Because this massive accumulation of debt was predicted, because it was foreseeable, because it was unnecessary, because it was the result of willful and reckless disregard for the warnings that were given and for the fundamentals of economic management, I am voting against the debt limit increase.

Now, Madam President, that was then-Senator Joe Biden in March of 2006, right before every single Democratic Senator voted against raising the debt limit and made a unified Republican government do it alone.

Here is another quote:

Today's fiscal mess . . . is the inevitable outcome of policies that consistently ignored evidence and experience. My symbolic vote against raising the debt limit would have been a protest of the policies that have brought us to this point, and a demand that we change course.

Well, that same speaker, then-Senator Biden, 2 years earlier in 2004.

As Senate Republicans have made clear since last July and as I reminded the President in a letter just this morning, his sentiments then are our sentiments now. His sentiments then are our sentiments now.

For the last few weeks, Washington Democrats tried to forget that they lined up to oppose debt limit increases during unified Republican government. They pretended these votes are always bipartisan. Well, that was simply not true.

So now our colleagues have moved on to yet another new argument that is equally flimsy. Now they claim they would be perfectly happy to handle this responsibility with 51 votes done one way, but they would rather risk the Nation's credit than doing it with 51 votes a slightly different way—two different ways to achieve 51 votes. I am not kidding. This is the position they are taking. The President said it today.

The reconciliation procedure would be slightly more inconvenient, they said—a few more days, a few more votes they would rather duck. The Democratic leaders running America are saying with a straight face that the entire U.S. economy should live or die based on the procedural convenience—convenience—of Washington Democrats.

Now, they have got no problem using the party-line process over and over and over to spend trillions and transform the country, but now, for this purpose only, they suddenly and mysteriously find it unappealing.

Democrats could not be more capable of handling this on their own. Just months ago, the Democratic leader won new powers to reuse reconciliation over and over. They don't even need our consent to set a vote at 51 instead of 60. They need even less help raising the debt limit than majorities needed in the past. So trust me, Madam President—if Republicans were sitting on a hidden veto power to stop reconciliation bills, you would have heard about

it way back in the springtime. The majority doesn't need our votes. They just want a bipartisan shortcut around procedural hurdles that they can actually clear on their own, and they want that shortcut so they can pivot right back to partisan spending as fast as possible. They want a bipartisan shortcut to get right back to more partisan hardball. And Republicans have spent 2½ months—this is no surprise; 2½ months ago—explaining that this is the way they needed to go forward on the debt ceiling.

This unified Democratic government is having trouble governing. They couldn't even pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill which the President negotiated and the Speaker of the House promised would pass last week.

The majority needs to stop sleepwalking toward yet another preventable crisis. Democrats need to tackle the debt limit. We gave them a roadmap and 3 months' notice. I suggest that our colleagues get moving.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on an obviously related matter, speaking of Democrats' reckless taxing and spending, this unified government is behind closed doors brainstorming ways to make inflation even more painful for American families. Their next reckless taxing-and-spending spree is packed with radical, leftwing policies and the biggest tax hike on the American people in half a century.

So far, the bill is more than 2,400 pages long, but it can be summarized in just four words: hurts families and helps China. Hurts families and helps China.

Wasting trillions and trillions of dollars on socialism would be a bad idea any day, but it is a uniquely bad idea at a time when American families are already being hammered by inflation and soaring costs.

The government's own data continue to indicate that the historic and painful inflation that began to take hold of our economy this spring isn't going anywhere anytime soon. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve acknowledged last week that rising prices have become an increasingly broad and structural problem. Last week, the Commerce Department reported that inflation has continued to rise faster than at any time since 1991. The Democrats' inflation is so bad that even though the average American worker has gotten a multiple-percentage-point pay raise over the last year, their actual purchasing power has actually been cut. Their paychecks have gone up, but their buying power has gone down.

Wholesale inflation just marked the steepest 12-month jump on record. Even dollar stores are having to raise their prices. Just ask any American family about the last few trips to the supermarket, the gas station, or the toy store. Heaven forbid if they have had to participate in the housing market or the auto market anytime lately.

And the Democrats are uniting around yet another multitrillion-dollar taxing-and-spending spree? I guess our colleagues think they can inflate their way out of inflation. That is going to be an extraordinarily painful experiment for the middle-class families of our country.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR AMERICANS ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 1301, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 1301, a bill to provide for the publication by the Secretary of Health and Human Services of physical activity recommendations for Americans.

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill.

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with Schumer amendment No. 3835, to change the enactment date.

Schumer amendment No. 3836 (to amendment No. 3835), of a perfecting nature.

Schumer motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Schumer amendment No. 3837, to change the enactment date.

Schumer amendment No. 3838 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 3837), of a perfecting nature.

Schumer amendment No. 3839 (to amendment No. 3838), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened closely to the speech by the Republican Senate leader, and I have heard statements made over the weekend on television. I think this is a moment where we might consider for just a minute or two a lesson on Senate 101 so there is an understanding of where we are and why we are at this place.

There are 100 Members of the Senate. Currently, there are 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans. Under the ordinary course of business, which has become extraordinary in this Chamber, a majority rules, so 51 votes will pass an amendment or a bill in most cases.

However, there is a creature in the Senate known as a filibuster, and the filibuster requires that 60 votes be found in order to prevail on a motion or a measure.

The filibuster raises the requirement from a simple majority to 60 votes. The Senator from Kentucky knows that as well as I do, he has been here longer than I have, that filibuster makes all the difference in the world. So to argue “The Democrats have the majority; why don’t they just take this majority and do their business?” is to ignore the obvious.

What the Republicans have decided to do is, for the first time perhaps ever—I don’t want to say that without checking the record for sure—but certainly in modern history, to require that when we pass the debt ceiling, we need to have 60 votes on the floor of the Senate. Well, it is no great revelation that with 50 Democrats, we would need 10 Republicans, and the Senate Republican leader has made it clear: He ain’t giving us a vote, not one. So we have come to a standstill.

We are 2 weeks away from a default. For the first time in the history of the United States that we would default on our debt, it is as if America had a big home and a big mortgage and decided one month not to pay on the mortgage. Well, let’s hope the day would come when the payment would be made, but in the meantime, there is a serious question then raised about the credit reputation of the United States, and that is exactly the fire that the Republicans are playing with by imposing a filibuster on this simple measure. They know that they can stop us as long as 60 votes are needed and they give none.

One of our colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE, made an interesting observation in our caucus lunch last week. I hope he will forgive me if I try to paraphrase it. He said: Many people argue that we need a filibuster because it really encourages bipartisanship. We have to come together. We have to look for compromise.

Well, how do you compromise when the debt ceiling question is whether you do it or don’t do it? And that is what is at stake here. Are we going to acknowledge the debt of the United States to its creditors far and wide and continue the business of this economy and this government? Republicans say: No, we would rather play fire with it. But they leave out that one element that is so critical: It is their decision, their filibuster that stops this.

I believe that Senator SCHUMER and the Democrats will offer them this opportunity again this week. Senator SCHUMER said as much. But it really troubles me that we are at a point in our history, recovering from this pandemic, businesses getting back on their feet, employees need to go back to work—and the Republicans have taken this strategy of defaulting on the national debt.

As far as the characterization of what reconciliation will do, Senator

MCCONNELL continues to come to the floor repeatedly and say: “It will hurt families.” Well, one of the provisions in the reconciliation bill, which I hope survives our compromise negotiation, will help families find affordable, quality daycare.

When you look at the fact that the vast majority of those who are not returning to work are women, you understand the circumstances. Many of them question whether or not school is going to be in person or by Zoom. They question whether or not they can find affordable daycare in any direction, and they question whether they can afford it once they find it.

If we took that worry off the family plate and said “We are going to make sure that you have accessible, affordable childcare for your children,” think of the relief it would give and the fact that many would return to the workplace.

According to the Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL, that hurts families. Hurts them? It helps them in ways that many of us don’t even understand. Can you imagine frantically leaving a child at home in the care of someone you don’t quite trust because you have no alternative but to go to work and try to earn a paycheck to feed that child and pay the rent? I wouldn’t want to be in that desperate situation. I wouldn’t want anyone in family to face it. To say that hurts families, to do that, is certainly wrong. It would help them if reconciliation includes that measure.

We also have a pre-K program to give kids who struggle a helping hand and a fresh start. We know the Head Start Program—it was created I guess almost 60-plus years ago—has had positive results in preparing people to go to college. Yes, Head Start Programs when they are young children—3, 4, and 5 years old—can make difference in their lives, how they learn, and what they do. So we want to make that the official policy of this country, that we have 2 years of pre-K education available to families. I think they will thank us for it, and in the future, generations that are helped with this will thank us as well.

The notion of extending the school year from K-12 through K-14, to put 2 years of community college without cost for families, is an extraordinary commitment.

There was a time in the turn of the 19th to the 20th century when America decided to make a big, bold experiment. It was called high schools. Up until that point, most families were lucky to get kids through eighth grade. The rich families, the ones well-positioned, would take them to high school. Well, we decided to make high school a universal, national experience in America. So you wouldn’t quit at the 8th grade; you would finish in the 12th grade. Did it result in anything good for us? Take a look at the 20th century. With an educated, motivated workforce, America led the world. It is